

REMARKS

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-8 are pending with Claims 1 and 8 being independent. Claims 1 and 8 have been amended. Support for the claim changes can be found in the original disclosure, and therefore no new matter has been added.

Requested Action

Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw the outstanding rejections in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claim Rejections

Claims 1-6, and 8 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takahashi, U.S. Patent Publication Application No. 2003/0090750, in view of Shimizu, U.S. Patent No. 6,862,039. Claim 7 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takahashi in view of Shimizu, and Wheeler, U.S. Patent No. 7,133,070.

In response, while not conceding the propriety of the rejections, independent Claims 1 and 8 have been amended. Applicants submit that as amended, these claims are allowable for the following reasons.

Independent Claim 1 relates to an image pickup device comprising an imaging device, an instruction unit that instructs the selection of a given chromatic color area on a photography screen, a storage unit, a selection unit, and a white balance processing unit.

The storage unit stores a plurality of correction values which correspond to a plurality of persons' skin colors, respectively. The selection unit selects one of the plurality of persons' skin colors.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite that each of the stored correction values is information about a skin color axis for each of the plurality of different persons' skin colors. Claim 1 has also been amended to recite that the white balance processing unit specifies a color temperature of a light source on the basis of the correction value which is stored in the storage unit and corresponds to the person skin color selected by the selection unit, and an output signal of the imaging device representing a parameter of the selected given chromatic color area, and conducts white balance processing in accordance with a white balance coefficient that corresponds to the specified color temperature of the light source.

In contrast, the citations to Takahashi and Shimizu are not understood to disclose or suggest a storage unit that stores a plurality of correction values which correspond to a plurality of persons' skin colors, respectively, where each of the stored correction values is information about a skin color axis for each of the plurality of different persons' skin colors, as recited by amended Claim 1. Therefore, these citations are also not understood to disclose or suggest a white balance processing unit that specifies a color temperature of a light source on the basis of the correction value which is stored in the storage unit and corresponds to the person skin color selected by the selection unit, and an output signal of the imaging device representing a parameter of the selected given chromatic color area, and conducts white balance processing in accordance with a white

balance coefficient that corresponds to the specified color temperature of the light source, as also recited by amended Claim 1.

Rather, the paragraph [0076] of the Takahashi citation states that "[S]kin color can be selected from subject colors as a color appearing frequently in photographing...", which is not the newly-claimed skin color axis.

The Office Action refers to memories 30 and 31 (Fig.6 and paragraphs [0136]-[0138]) and a skin color candidate detection section 18 (Fig.1 and [0076]-[0077]) to argue that the reference to Takahashi teaches the storage unit and the white balance processing unit of the present invention. However, the memories 30 and 31 are understood to merely store image signals which were subjected to white balance correction using coefficients α_1 and α_2 that are mere multiplication coefficients (paragraph [0071]) optimized by different functions (e.g., paragraphs [0136]-[0138]), respectively. Thus, this citation is understood to fail to teach a storage unit that stores a plurality of correction values each of which is information about a skin color axis for each of a plurality of person's skin colors to be selected, as recited in the amended independent Claim 1. And the citation to Shimizu is relied on only to show an instruction unit for instructing selection of a given chromatic area on a photography screen.

Since the citations to Takahashi and Shimizu are not understood to disclose or suggest at least several features of amended Claim 1, Applicants submit that the Office has not yet established a prima facie case of obviousness against amended Claim 1. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claim 1 be withdrawn. And because corresponding method Claim 8 has been amended in a similar manner, this claim is

submitted to be allowable for similar reasons. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claim 8 be withdrawn.

The dependent claims are allowable for the reasons given for the independent claims and because they recite features that are patentable in their own right. Individual consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully solicited.

Conclusion

In view of the above amendments and remarks, the application is now in allowable form and entry of this amendment is considered proper. Therefore, early passage to issue is respectfully solicited.

Any fee required in connection with this paper should be charged to Deposit Account No. 06-1205.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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